

House Republican Press Release

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Democrats Bow to Labor Unions and Scuttle Reform



State Rep. Claudia “Dolly” Powers

Any doubts that Democratic leaders in the legislature are more interested in partisan politics and fulfilling every wish of organized labor unions were publicly laid to rest last Thursday. They killed state contract reform with a “poison pill” provision (section 14 of the bill) that would effectively terminate, within two years, the current contracts of private service providers who run group homes, homeless shelters, prison programs, services to AIDS patients and job training, to name just a few. There are 1,340 Fairfield county non-profit agencies that report to the federal government for tax purposes.

The language will force Gov. Jodi Rell to once again veto the reform bill just as she did last spring. Section 14 was actually written by a labor union boss and the Democratic leadership, knowing that no governor could allow the right of the executive branch to make policy decisions to be eliminated, docilely inserted it in the reform bill.

This union-driven legislation would also require all salaries and benefits to match state employees’ levels – automatically raising the non-profit personnel costs at least 40 percent.

The Democrat position is indefensible, irrational and duplicitous. Many House Democrats are salaried employees of non-profits. Their bosses, the folks who run these

agencies, were loudly and vehemently opposed to section 14. The Connecticut Nonprofit Human Services Cabinet, the parent statewide association that lobbies for more than 500 agencies, pled with House Democrats to withdraw the anti-privatization provision and to try to understand the catastrophic effects on their ability to help our most vulnerable citizens.

The Democratic response in floor debate was to claim that the private providers couldn’t read the legal language and that they were lying about the effects of the law. Democratic headcounters assured some wavering members, who were actually listening to their non-profits, that they could safely vote for the bill and please the union bosses because Gov. Rell would veto the bill.

In an almost solid party line vote of 85-51 the Democrat majority caved to the unions. Locally, Democrat State Representatives Jim Shapiro, Gerald Fox and Carlo Leone voted for the bill and against all the local non-profit service providers. Rep. Christel Truglia was absent.

All the Republican lawmakers voted against the bill.

The 1,340 Fairfield County non-profits, their boards of directors and their armies of volunteers might want to ask their elected officials about these votes. House Republicans even offered an amendment to delete section 14 so that the contracting reform bill could move forward cleanly. The Democrats all voted against the amendment.

Last June Gov. Rell instituted most of the reforms found in the bill by executive order. These reforms are in place and working today. The legislature lost a chance to join Gov. Rell in reforming state government. That chance was killed by the Democratic leadership doing the bidding of union bosses.

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